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ABSTRACT

Educators in Newfoundland are recognizing the value of media programs and are requesting instructional materials in order to meet the various needs of their students. In response, the Government of Newfoundland made a $5.00 per pupil grant to school districts for the purchase of instructional materials during the 1970-71 school year and has raised it to $8.00 for 1975-76. However, most school districts in the province are unable to make maximum use of this grant since they lack either the trained personnel to purchase and organize the materials or the proper physical facilities to house and distribute the materials. The problem is especially acute in those districts and schools located away from the major urban centers. This report discusses various alternatives for providing adequate instructional materials to schools in rural Newfoundland. These are: individual school libraries, a school-housed public library, bookmobiles, use of volunteer help, and regional centralized libraries. (NQ)

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Alternatives For Providing School Library Service To Rural Newfoundland

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As educators have come to accept the responsibility for developing a mass education system to serve the needs of all children, they have become aware that children possess a wide range of abilities and attitudes. Since these children do not all want or need the same things from the school, instruction cannot be identical for every pupil. Instead, it must be geared to meet the individual needs of the child. While there has been a number of approaches to the problem of individualizing instruction, most of these approaches recognize that if a pupil is to receive instruction designed to meet his or her individual needs, then that pupil must have access to a wide variety of instructional materials, geared to specific needs at a paticular point in time. No longer, if indeed it ever was true, can a single textbook be used to meet the instructional needs of all the children in a class or other learning situation.

If a teacher is to have access to a wide variety of instructional materials, then some form of library or instructional materials center[1] is necessary, to house and organize the material. The importance of the school library has been recognized by a number of writers, such as Goodlad and Anderson who stated that "... a dynamic system of non-grading virtually demands a centralized school library."[2]

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Perhaps the best example of the value of a dynamic school library program is the Knapp School Library Project. This program was carried out in five elementary schools, one junior high and one high school in the United States from 1963 - 1968. Results of this five year study show that instructional opportunities can be greatly improved for students in schools with dynamic school library programs.[3]

Educators in Newfoundland are now beginning to recognize the value of media programs and are asking for instructional materials, so that they can attempt to meet the various needs of their students. In response to this demand, the Government of Newfoundland made a $5.00 per pupil grant to school districts for the purchase of instructional materials during the 1970 - 71 school year and has raised this to $8.00 for the 1975 -76 school year. It appears, however, that most school districts in the province were unable to make maximum use of the grant, since they lacked trained personnel to purchase and organize to materials. Most districts also lacked the proper physical facilities to house and distribute instructional materials. The problem is especially acute in those districts and schools located away from the major urban centers. It is apparent, therefore, that if teachers are to make effective use of instructional materials, some type of program must be developed to enable schools to acquire the personnel and facilities to carry out a media program.

Individual School Libraries

The generally accepted approach to making effective use of instructional materials is to establish some form of library in the individual school. While it is true that a centralized school library staffed by qualified personnel is the best approach for developing an effective media program, this is often impractical, due to financial reasons and the shortage of trained staff. Library programs are always expensive and this is especially true in small schools and school systems. If a library program can serve about 10,000 pupils, it can provide adequate ongoing service

using about 2 - 3% of the total school budget, with the percentage increasing as the number of pupils served decreases.[4] Because of the sparse population of most of Newfoundland, individual school libraries would be very uneconomical even if staff could be found to run all these programs. Therefore, some alternative method to the traditional school housed central library will have to be found so that all of the schools in Newfoundland will have at least some access to the media programs that are now taken for granted in most large school systems in the United States and Canada.

School/Public Library

Another approach is to establish a school housed public library. Ida Reddy has reported that this situation was once common in Ontario; today, however, there is only one school housed public library left and the library board of this library is in the process of building separate facilities for the public library. Most of the complaints about this type of combination came from the public library staff and patrons, rather than from schools. It seems that the book collections and library service were orientated toward the school curriculum and "... best service to the general public will be marginal." With the public library located in the school, common complaints were that adults could only use the library after school hours, that adult materials were often censored from the school housed collection and that adults resented having to follow school rules while using the library. Reddy sees two bad results of the combination approach in Ontario. She feels that the development of school media programs was delayed in parts of Ontario for an unnecessarily long period of time and that the public library services and collections were severely drained by the attempt to serve both the schools and the public. She does believe, however, that this type of approach was successful in bringing some library services to schools, when no other service was available. In Newfoundland, the communities of Lourdes and Port au Port West have had some success with this type of approach, but again, a compromise situation has been developed.

Lowell Martin, writing in the ALA Bulletin, reported similar problems in attempts to house public libraries in schools in the U.S. Many American school districts used this approach in an effort to bring about inexpensive school library service, but these programs met with failure primarily because adults would not use facilities located in schools. Thus, in both Canada and the United States, it was the public library that pulled out of combination programs because they saw that such programs did not serve the particular needs of public library patrons in an adequate manners. Public and school libraries do have different functions in society and the needs of pupils are probably best served when they have access to both types of programs because, "Evidence accumulates that more school children are using the public library, and particularly so when they have libraries in the school."[6]

Bookmobiles

The alternative of giving school service via Bookmobile is reported in the literature by Joyce Moody. In the El Ranch Unified School District of California, a bookmobile is used to provide library service to seventeen public and seven private schools which lack library facilities of their own.[7] Educators and school children of these schools report that this type of service is quite successful in meeting their needs until each school can estabilish its own library. The major complaint made about bookmobile service was that it was somewhat inefficient, since the bookmobile needed to return to the central depot frequently, for pickup of needed materials. Ms. Moody feels that bookmobiles will advertise to the public the need for school libraries, since the positive effects of even limited library service will be noticed by the community.

In "The Implications of the Library Service Act for service to children and young people"[8], Mary Helen Mahar discusses the use of bookmobiles in the western United States, where school districts serve rural areas with many one and two room schools. The bookmobiles visit the school every two weeks or so, but this type of service does not really serve the educational needs of the children. This seems due to the fact that little or no professional help is given to students or teachers, since the librarian is overwhelmed with the clerical task of circulating the materials. As well, most of the materials are usually not related to the particular curriculum problems of a given school at a given time. Mahar also reports that school districts have used bookmobile service as an excuse not to

establish permanent library facilities, a development which seems to clash with Moody's belief that bookmobile service will encourage the building of school instructional materials centers.

Use of Volunteer Help

Some school districts have attempted to reduce the cost of media services to small schools by establishing school library collections that are run by volunteers, usually parents, or by paid non-professional staff. A study conducted in 1963, however, found that there was no improvement in services or educational benefits in schools with volunteer-run centralized libraries, as compared to just having a classroom collection of books.[9] Baker and Burnham have concluded that the greatest educational gain is made by children who have access to a qualified school librarian, that is, a person with a graduate degree in library science and a teaching certificate. This means that the "biggest single problem facing school libraries today is the shortage of qualified personnel."[10] The problem is compounded by the fact that most teachers do not really know how to make effective use of library resources when they are available, and need a qualified individual to show them how to do this.

Regional Centralized Libraries

If a qualified librarian is the key to a successful library program, but on the other hand, (because of personnel shortages and cost) most small schools will be unable to get their own specialist, then Baker and Burnham believe that some form of regional centralized library service must be made available to these schools. Such a library would house a central collection of books and other instructional materials, to supplement individual school collections. More important, however, the center would be staffed by qualified librarians who would act as resource persons to the volunteer library worker and teachers in the individual schools. There would be a problem of delay in obtaining materials and services from the central library, but this could be overcome by automated information, storage and retrieval system, such as those being used in the Education Centre Library of the Toronto Board of Education.[11]

One advantage to regionally centered media services, often cited by writers such as Nelson, is that this type of service allows the teacher of a given school to have access to a larger collection of materials than would be possible if each school had its own collection. If a system of 60 schools were allotted $200 each, per year, for the purchase of filmstrips, each school would be able to buy one copy of 33 filmstrips a year. If, on the other hand, they pool their resources into a centralized collection, five copies of 396 different titles could be purchased each year. It is often claimed that teachers will make greater use of materials if they are housed within an individual school. Nelson says that teachers really make greater use of centralized collections than they do individual school collections. He adds that teachers who have access to both types of services will tend to use materials from the central library service because of the availability of a greater number of materials in the central library.[12]

Sedley Hall, in his study of some instructional materials centers in the United States, found, that 95% of teachers in three school districts having a system-wide approach favoured this method.[13] In spite of the fact that teachers using district or regional library systems seem happy with this approach. Hall reports that the trend in the U.S. is toward having the instructional materials center located in the individual school building. The increasing urbanization of the United States, and the large amounts of federal money that were poured into school library programs, seems to have allowed districts to ignore the high cost factor of providing this type of service.

In his study of school libraries in British Columbia, John S. Church identified three trends which indicate a need for more regional library service in that province.[14] Much of the new and expensive media, which has a high cost in relation to a somewhat low "use rate", cannot be economically purchased on a local level. The province-wide audio-visual service is breaking down so that only 25 - 30% of requests can now be filled, a trend which also appears to be taking place in Newfoundland. Finally, the regional library centers can centrally order, process and catalog materials much more efficiently than can local school libraries. This also frees local library personnel to spend more time working with teachers and pupils.

These regional libraries in British Columbia serve schools with and without their own school libraries. One organizational approach used in B.C. is to locate a regional library in a large school that would normally be able to have its own library. Two or more professional librarians are employed in the center, with one serving the school that houses the collection, and the other serving the small rural schools in the area. Books are loaned to the small schools for six week periods and the collection is rotated. This gives each rural school access to a much greater number of titles than would ever be possible if they all had their own permanent collections. The travelling librarian also prepares teaching blocks of special materials, at the request of individual teachers and serves as a resource person to teachers, to make the best possible use of this material. One of the problems arising from this approach in B.C. was that local teachers did not really get to choose the materials that they were going to use in class, since the librarian brought only those materials that he or she thought were suitable for teaching a given lesson. Secondly, spontaneous instruction was often impossible, since materials had to be ordered from the district center.[15]

Another Approach in Manitoba

Grace d'Arcy reports a different approach to regional library services in Manitoba. In that province, rural schools typically own their own basic collection of books, but these are ordered, processed and cataloged by the central library. The central library staff attempts to balance the book collections of the various schools so that unnecessary duplication of titles is avoided. Each school is given a card catalog, listing the materials available in all the schools in a given area. Library users can look in their school's union catalog to locate a given title, and then borrow this from the library that owns it.[16] The district library also owns a collection of popular novels and other light reading, plus special collections for teaching certain topics. These are loaned to the various schools upon request. Thus, while each school has its own library, it also has access to the resources of a number of libraries.

The Satellite Plan

Pennsylvania uses a similar approach to Manitoba's in an attempt to provide adequate library service to rural schools. This system, as reported by John Rowell, is called the Satellite Plan.[17] One school, centrally located in the district, is chosen to serve as the district library. The staff of this center purchase, process and catalog books for all the schools in the district and maintain the larger central collection, located in the district library. Each of the other schools gets a small basic reference collection plus a catalog indicating the holdings of the central library (available to the schools upon request). Professional librarians from the central library visit each of the schools on a regular basis to provide reference service to teachers and pupils. They also consult with individual teachers in order to learn about the teacher's instructional plan. The librarian prepares special collections of materials for class use, and shows the teacher how to make the best use of the materials. In this way, each school has access to a large collection of materials and, at least, to the part-time services of a qualified librarian.

SUMMARY

It is evident from the literature that a variety of approaches has been taken by school systems in an attempt to organize adequate library services for small and rural schools. The combining of school and public library services in rural areas seems to be a logical approach to bringing adequate library service to areas with few people. The available evidence, however, reports that these combined libraries have been failures, typically because of the dissatisfaction of the adult patrons of the public library. Perhaps if the school came to be recognized as a community center this approach might prove to be successful, but with the long history of failure for combined public school libraries, it would be unwise for a school district to attempt this method of meeting library needs.

Although bookmobile service has met with some limited success in meeting the library needs of schools, it seems at best a stopgap measure. The materials from bookmobiles do not stay in the school for any length of time and little professional help is given to school teachers and students by the bookmobile staff. Another problem with bookmobile service in rural areas is that the vehicles can only be used where there are good roads. In rural areas with poor or no roads, such as much of Newfoundland, bookmobile service is an impossibility.

Classroom or school wide collections of materials that are administered by volunteers have not proven to be very effective in meeting instructional needs, since, as much evidence indicates, a qualified librarian is the key to a successful instructional materials program. These small school collections have, however, been used quite successfully in conjunction with some types of regional library programs. As the literature has indicated, there is a variety of different organizational patterns for regional library service. They all operate on the principle that a qualified librarian will be available to select and organize instructional materials. Most of these programs also make a librarian available on some basis, as a resource person to school staffs, to make the best possible instructional use of the materials.

Although there is no statistical evidence to demonstrate that one type of regional library set-up produces more educational benefits than the other types, the literature seems to indicate that certain types of programs are more effective than others. Those organizational patterns which allow a school to keep a small basic reference collection, supplemented by rotating titles and materials from the certain collection, have a number of benefits over systems in which all the titles are constantly rotated. Teachers will know that certain books are available and will become familiar with their use. The permanent collections can also serve as the nucleus of a regular in-school materials center if future resources permit such an establishment. There is no question that the regional library approach allows schools,

with or without their own school library, access to a greater number of materials on a more economical basis than would be possible under any other system. Although there are some problems with the time lag involved in getting materials, especially in spontaneous learning situations, a regional library system is the most practical approach to providing adequate school library service to rural areas.

The Newfoundland Situation -- Solution

Therefore, to solve the problem of providing adequate instructional materials to schools in rural Newfoundland, regional resource centers should be established in each of the major geographic regions of the province. The precise location of each center would, of course, depend on population trends and transportation facilities in the region. These regional resource centers would acquire an adequate collection of print and nonprint materials, as determined by Canadian Library Association standards. Each center would have adequate staff, both professional and clerical, so that materials could be selected, ordered, processed and cataloged for the regional center, as well as for individual school collections in the region. Two or more field librarians would be employed in each center to travel to the individual schools, to show teachers and pupils exactly how to make the best possible use of materials available, and to compile resource units for teachers on specific topics.

Individual schools would have small basic reference collections plus a union card catalog, showing all the materials available at the regional library and at other school libraries. Members of a school desiring materials would call or write to the central library, and materials would then be sent to them by mail or messenger. If conditions changed, making it possible for a school to establish its own instructional materials center, it could still make use of the regional libraries processing facilities, and could also supplement its collection with materials owned by the regional library. Such a system would make it possible for the teachers of all schools in Newfoundland, no matter how small or isolated, to have access to the wide range of instructional materials, and access to persons expert in the use of these materials. In this way they will be able to work towards meeting the individual needs of their students.

FOOTNOTES

1. In this paper, the term library, resource center and instructional materials center are used interchangeably.

2. John Goodlad & Robert H. Anderson. "Nongraded elementary school". (N.Y., Harcourt, 1963) p. 224.

3. Pegy Sullivan, ed. "Realization: the final report of the Knapp school libraries project". (Chic., A.L.A., 1968).

4. John Rowell. "The rural school library". American School Board Journal (151, Nov. 1965), p. 31.

5. Ida Reddy. "The school-housed public library -- an evaluation". Brief on School Libraries to the Worth Commission on Education Planning (Edmonton, School Library Council, 1971) p. B-2.

6. Lowell Martin. "Relation of public and school libraries in serving youth". ALA Bulletin (53, Feb., 1959) p.113.

7. Joyce H. Moody. "IMC on wheels". School Library Journal (14, Jan. 1967) p. 304.

8. Mary Helen Mahar. "Implications of the Library Services Act for service to children and young people". ALA Bulletin (55, Feb. 1959) p. 121.

9. Catherine Baker & Brian Burnham. "At the heart of things: a review of the advantages and disadvantages of a centralized school library". Canadian Educational and Research Digest (8, Dec. 1968) p. 330.

10. Ibid.

11. Ibid., p. 332.

12. Neil H. Helson. "Let's reconsider". Canadian-Audio-Visual Review (11, Nov.-Dec. 1966) p. 10.

13. Sedley D. Hall. "Instructional materials center". Elementary School Journal (64, Jan. 1964) p. 212.

14. John S. Church. "Personalizing learning; a study of school libraries and other resource centers in British Columbia". (Vancouver, Educational Research Institute, 1970) p. 27.

15. Ibid., p. 14.

16. Grace d'Arcy. "Library service to rural areas". Index. (2, Spring, 1969) p. 18.

17. John Rowell. "The rural school library". p. 31.